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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LILONGWE 000910

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PINR](#) [MI](#)

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION ROUNDUP: WHO'S WHERE IN OPPOSITION

REF: A. LILONGWE 798

[B](#). LILONGWE 488
[C](#). LILONGWE 493
[D](#). LILONGWE 38
[E](#). LILONGWE 270
[F](#). LILONGWE 559
[G](#). LILONGWE 895

[1](#)1. (SBU) Since the May 2004 presidential and parliamentary elections, the landscape of opposition politics has changed. Political parties and national politics remain focused on individuals, but many of those individuals now have their own parties. While not necessarily breaking down the strong regionalism that exists in Malawian politics, the representation of several parties in Parliament creates a much less stable working majority in the House. With President Mutharika's support waning in his own United Democratic Front (UDF), balancing opposition and ruling party politics is becoming more difficult, as evidenced by the current budget debate (reftel G). The following details the alliances of principle opposition figures.

John Tembo: President of the Malawi Congress Party

[1](#)2. (SBU) Winning the second most votes in the 2004 presidential elections with twenty-seven percent of the popular vote, Malawi Congress Party (MCP) President John Tembo is Leader of Opposition in Parliament, and since the elections he has settled comfortably into that role. The MCP, with more seats in the House than any other political party, is also the most stable voting block. Tembo and the MCP have supported the Mutharika administration on some initiatives, such as some of the President's controversial appointments, but they have also been a meaningful opposition to important government issues, such as the budget. At present, Tembo is the party president with the most control over his party, and the MCP is the most unified party.

Gwanda Chakuamba: President of the Republican Party

[1](#)3. (SBU) After coming in third in the presidential elections and mounting a brief legal challenge to Mutharika's win, Gwanda Chakuamba and his Republican Party (RP) formed an alliance with the UDF (reftel B). Chakuamba, who promised he would retire from politics if he did not win as the Mgwirizano Coalition's presidential candidate and who does not have a seat in the House, has thus far kept his word. The media generally speculate that Chakuamba was willing to ally his party with the UDF and drop the court case because the GOM agreed to pay Chakuamba an outstanding settlement from his imprisonment under the Banda regime. Newly appointed Attorney General Ralph Kasambara announced recently that the GOM plans to appeal the court's decision to award Chakuamba MK 56 million (USD 520,000) in restitution. If government pursues the appeal, RP, which is the largest party after the UDF in the UDF's working majority, will likely return to the opposition ranks of the House.

Chakufwa Chihana: President of the Alliance for Democracy

[1](#)4. (SBU) For unilaterally deciding to back the UDF and Mutharika in the 2004 elections, Chakufwa Chihana has become largely unpopular in his former Northern Region stronghold, and his Alliance for Democracy (AFORD) party won less than a third of the parliamentary seats it had in 1999. Chihana has recently made unsuccessful attempts to re-gain favor in the North and among AFORD break-away party Movement for Genuine Democracy (MGODE) MPs. After his short stint as Second Vice President and Minister of Agriculture at the end of President Muluzi's second administration, Chihana, still Minister of Agriculture, is aging, and concern about his pension is the likely cause of his current faithfulness to the UDF. Chihana's fickle political nature and unilateral decision-making have decimated the usually very solid Northern Region voting block that AFORD once controlled.

Sam Kandodo Banda: President of Movement for Genuine Democracy

[1](#)5. (SBU) Sam Kandodo Banda, former AFORD heavyweight, led the internal AFORD faction displeased with Chihana's leadership to form the Movement for Genuine Democracy (MGODE). More so than other parties, MGODE has focused on developing internal party structures, and it has gained some grassroots support

in the North Region as the viable alternative to AFORD. Shortly after the elections, MCODE formed an alliance with the UDF and received a minor ministerial position (reftel C). Kandodo Banda, though not a parliamentarian or minister, is recognized as the party's leader, and the party is poised to gain influence in the Northern Region.

Aleke Banda: President of People's Progressive Movement

16. (SBU) Aleke Banda, former UDF stalwart and Minister in both of President Muluzi's administrations, became the de facto head of the Mgwirizano Coalition when Chakuamba left the coalition to support the UDF. Banda, who had been the Coalition's vice presidential candidate, was elected the President of People's Progressive Movement (PPM) after he left the UDF (reftel D). He and PPM remain strongly anti-UDF. Reduced from its original strength of seven parties, the Mgwirizano Coalition currently comprises five parties and controls a handful of seats in Parliament. Taking the mantle from Chakuamba, Banda continues to pursue the legal challenge of the elections, though legal hurdles and questionable evidence have dogged the process.

Brown Mpinganjira: Re-Joined the United Democratic Front

17. (SBU) The once right-hand man of former President Bakili Muluzi, Brown Mpinganjira, who in 2001 formed the aggressive anti-UDF opposition pressure group cum political party the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), has re-joined the UDF after garnering few votes in the 2004 presidential elections. Disgruntled members of the NDA have tried to re-vitalize the opposition group, but the efforts have had little traction. Mpinganjira, seeing his political future better served in the UDF, no doubt eyes the party's presidential candidacy for 2009, as many believe the UDF will not allow President Mutharika to contest for a second term. (reftel A)

Hetherwick Ntaba: President of New Congress for Democracy

18. (SBU) Former MCP heavyweight Hetherwick Ntaba, who created the New Congress for Democracy (NCD) party to stand as a presidential candidate, earned himself a ministerial position just before the elections for pulling out of the presidential race and supporting the UDF (reftel E). In Mutharika's administration, Ntaba was appointed Minister of Health and is largely viewed as a UDF sellout. He is contesting the election results in his constituency, where he was defeated by an MCP candidate.

COMMENT

19. (SBU) The UDF's working majority in Parliament is fragile, and it does not help that it was orchestrated by UDF chairman Bakili Muluzi, not President Mutharika (reftel F). Maintaining that working majority will largely depend on how the individuals listed above are treated by the UDF. If Mutharika continues to neglect the necessary political housekeeping, he will either find himself without a working majority in Parliament or dependent on Muluzi to garner support from opposition leaders.

110. (SBU) COMMENT CONTINUED. National politics continue to focus on individuals, rather than ideologies. And, while there are more political parties represented in Parliament, support for those parties remains largely along regional lines: the UDF in the Southern Region; the MCP in the Central Region; and AFORD, PPM, and MCODE in the Northern Region.

END COMMENT.

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